United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, urging all Cambodian parties to cooperate fully with UNTAC in preparations for elections in May, calls on UNTAC to continue creation of neutral political environment; demands that all Cambodian parties end violence and intimidation committed on political or ethnic grounds.

+ Secretary-General condemns murders of Israeli civilians in Tel Aviv and Gaza; appeals for restraint in Israel and occupied territories.

+ Lord Owen, Co-Chairman of Yugoslav Conference, briefs European Community Council of Foreign Ministers in Brussels on developments in Bosnian peace talks; President Izetbegovic to return to New York for resumed negotiations later this week.

+ Total of 154 hectares of tropical forest disappeared in 1980s, while forest resources of industrialized countries continue to increase, according to FAO survey

+ Human Rights Commission, currently in session in Geneva, establishes Working Group on Right to Development.

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The Security Council, urging all Cambodian parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in view of the elections scheduled for 23 to 25 May, today called on UNTAC to continue in its efforts to create and maintain a neutral political environment conducive to the elections. It also asked the Secretary General to inform the Council before 15 May of the conditions and preparations for the elections.

The Council took that action by adopting unanimously resolution 810 (1993), by which it further demanded that all Cambodian parties take necessary measures to end acts of violence, threats and intimidation committed on political or ethnic grounds and urged cooperation of the parties with the

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UNTAC Special Prosecutor's Office in the investigations of such acts. It also demanded that all parties take all action necessary to safeguard the lives and the security of UNTAC personnel throughout Cambodia.

Recognizing that the Cambodians themselves were responsible for the implementation of the Paris Agreements of 1991 and the future stability and well-being of their country, the Council demanded that all parties honour in full their obligations to desist from all offensive military activity.

The Council further asked the Secretary-General to report to the Council in the context of his fourth progress report in April 1993 on the implementation of the present resolution and on any further measures that may be necessary and appropriate to ensure the realization of the fundamental objectives of the Paris Agreements.

In a previous report to the Security Council, dated 13 February, the Secretary-General had said that although UNTAC continued to encounter "serious problems" in its effort to prepare Cambodia for free and fair elections, some progress had been made. He had proposed that the Council issue a broadening of its demand for compliance with the Paris Agreements, since the response of some of the Cambodian parties to resolution 792 (1992) had "not been satisfactory".

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed deep concern over the recent upsurge in violence in Israel and the occupied territories and condemned the murders of Israeli civilians in Tel Aviv and Gaza, according to a statement issued at Headquarters today.

In a renewed appeal for "restraint by all sides in Israel and the occupied territories", the Secretary-General warned that acts of violence -- whether by Israelis or Palestinians -- only serve to undermine the confidence and trust required by the peace process.

The Secretary-General also firmly rejected allegations in the Israeli media that the United Nations was "less concerned" over violence against Jews than against peoples of other faiths or ethnic backgrounds. He opposed "all acts of violence", the statement noted.

In a related development, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has strongly refuted allegations that an Agency official failed to come to the aid of an Israeli citizen who had ventured beyond the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) checkpoint in Rafah on Saturday, 6 March.

Expressing "grave concern" about the allegations, the Agency explained in a press release issued over the weekend, that the UNRWA official - who happened to witness an Israeli-licensed car crashed into a wall and surrounded by a large group of people - had been prevented by the crowd to get close to the scene. Subsequently, she rushed to UNRWA installation to raise alarm over

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the phone. Unable to do so, she rushed back to the scene to try and help. A few minutes later, the Israeli military arrived and took control, the statement said.

The following evening, UNRWA officials explained these facts to the Civil Administration, the statement concluded.

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The Spokesman for the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on former Yugoslavia, Fred Eckhard, told correspondents today that Lord Owen, the European Community negotiator, had briefed the European Community Council of Foreign Ministers in Brussels today on the latest developments in the Bosnian peace talks. During the meeting, the Ministers restated "their solid support for the Co-Chairmen's peace plan", according to Lord Owen.

The other Co-Chairman, Cyrus Vance, was in New York today, where he was to meet with the contact group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata.

The spokesman also said that the three parties to the Bosnia talks had all left New York over the weekend. On Saturday, President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a statement at Headquarters, saying that after various consultations in Sarajevo he would return to New York later this week "with the intention of moving the discussion forward to a successful conclusion". Mr. Eckhard said the Co-Chairmen hoped President Izetbegovic would be in a position to sign the map arrangement upon his return to New York.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mile Akmadzic, has contended that the mandate of Alija Izetbegovic as President of Bosnia and Herzegovina had expired on 20 December 1992, and that he was therefore without constitutional authority to act in that capacity. In addition, the position of Haris Silajdzic, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "does not present fully" that of the Government, the Bosnian Prime Minister said.

The statement was contained in a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 1 March, in which Mr. Akmadzic also noted that the Presidency, and not the President alone, was the representative body of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the Government as a whole supported the Vance/Owen peace process, he said, there was no single position of the Government on the current stage of the talks, as each of the three negotiating parties -- Croats, Muslims and Serbs -- had their own position on the current proposal.

In a related development, the Deputy Vice President of the Croatian Parliament Dr.Domljan told correspondents today at Headquarters that neither the Parliament nor the public opinion in Croatia were satisfied with what the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) had done until now. He said that

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refugees had "not come back to their homes or villages and the Serb rebels are not disarmed". People were being expelled, even killed, even though UNPROFOR was present in the territory trying to control the situation, he said.

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A total of 154 million hectares of tropical forest have been lost between 1981 and 1990, continuing an increased pace of deforestation over the last 40 years, according to the latest Forest Resources Assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) issued in Rome today. By contrast, FAO reported, forest resources of industrialized countries continued to expand with gains higher than increased harvesting.

The FAO survey, which uses high resolution satellite data, shows than deforestation increased sharply in Asia and to a lesser extent in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. FAO attributed the loss of tropical forest mainly to population growth, rural poverty, and the resulting need to clear land for agriculture.

According to FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma, the population growth in the developing world will continue to put considerable strain on the world's natural resources in general and on forest resources in particular. He said the continued loss of tropical forest underscored the need for better land use planning and more sustainable use of forest resources.

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The Commission on Human Rights, currently in session in Geneva, has established a 15-member Working Group to study problems of economic development. Over the next three years, the new panel will also study the obstacles to implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development. The Working Group is expected to submit a report on the subject at next year's session of the Commission.

The Commission took that action last week by adopting a resolution which stated, in part, that "the biggest obstacles to the realization of the right to development lay at the international macroeconomic level as reflected in the widening gap between the North and the South, the rich and the poor".

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